

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. In combination:

a) a flexible package having
a elastomeric front wall and an elastomeric rear wall;
said front wall and said rear wall being sealed

together at a top seal;

a first zipper part attached to an inside surface of
said front wall and having a first engagement member facing said
rear wall;

a second zipper part attached to an inside surface of
said rear wall and having a second engagement member facing said
front wall;

said first and second engagement members being engaged
together;

said top seal being manually pinch-grip openable and
said first and second engagement members being manually pinch-
grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force applied to said
front and rear walls below said engagement members;

said front and rear walls having a sufficient strength
to resist tearing and deformation under the application of said
pinch-grip pulling force during pinch-grip opening; and

b) a food product stored inside said package below said
first and second engagement members.

2. The combination of claim 1, wherein said top seal is a
heat/pressure/dwell seal.

3. The combination of claim 2, wherein said top seal is a
heat, pressure and dwell seal.

4. The combination of claim 2, wherein said top seal is a non-heated, pressure and dwell seal.
5. The combination of claim 1, wherein said engagement members include interlocking protrusions.
6. The combination of claim 5, wherein said first engagement member has a male protrusion and wherein said second engagement member has at least one protrusion forming a female socket, said male protrusion being engaged in said female socket.
7. The combination of claim 1, wherein said front and rear walls are laminated plastic walls including at least one inner sealable layer and at least one outer wall layer.
8. The combination of claim 1, wherein said first engagement member consists of a single male protrusion and wherein said second engagement member consists of a single female socket, said male protrusion being engaged in said female socket.
9. The combination of claim 1, wherein said first and second zipper parts have cross-sectional shapes that are different from one another and are separate pieces that are connected together only at said engagement members.
10. The combination of claim 1, wherein said food product includes salty, sweet or savory snack foods.
11. The combination of claim 10, wherein said food product includes snack food chips.

12. The combination of claim 11, wherein said food product includes potato or corn based chips.

13. The combination of claim 1, wherein said top seal is manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of less than about 3 lbs/inch.

14. The combination of claim 1, wherein said top seal is manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of between about 1 to 2 lbs/inch.

15. The combination of claim 1, wherein said first and second engagement members are manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of less than about $2 \frac{1}{2}$ lbs/inch.

16. The combination of claim 1, wherein said first and second engagement members are manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of between about $1 \frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lbs/inch.

17. In combination:

- a) a flexible package, including
 - front and rear walls, said front and rear walls being laminated plastic walls including at least one inner sealable layer and at least one outer wall layer,
 - a bottom seal formed between lower sides of said front and rear walls;
 - a top seal formed between upper sides of said front and rear walls, said top seal including a seal between said inner sealable layers;
 - a zipper located within said package proximate said top seal, said zipper having a first zipper part having a first

engagement member extending lengthwise along said zipper part and a widened base having at least two points of sealant behind said base;

said zipper also having a second zipper part having a second engagement member extending lengthwise along said zipper part and a widened base having at least two points of sealant behind said base;

said first engagement member being engaged with said second engagement member;

said at least two points of sealant on said first zipper part being sealed to said inner layer of said film at a first side of said vertical tube and said at least two points of sealant on said second zipper part being sealed to said inner layer of said film at a second side of said vertical tube;

said seal between said inner sealable layers being openable by de-lamination and said engagement between said engagement members of said zipper being disengaged upon the application of a predetermined pinch-grip pulling force; and

b) food product stored within said package between said closed zipper and said bottom seal.

18. The combination of claim 17, wherein said first engagement member has a male protrusion and said second engagement member has a female socket, said male protrusion being engaged with said female socket.

19. The combination of claim 17, wherein said first engagement member consists of a single male protrusion and said second engagement member consists of a single female socket, said male protrusion being engaged with said female socket.

20. The combination of claim 17, wherein said first and second zipper parts have cross-sectional shapes that are different from one another and are separate pieces that are connected together only at said engagement members.

21. The combination of claim 17, wherein said food product includes salty, sweet or savory snack foods.

22. The combination of claim 21, wherein said snacks foods include potato or corn based chips.

23. The combination of claim 17, wherein said top seal is manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of less than about 3 lbs/inch.

24. The combination of claim 17, wherein said top seal is manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of between about 1 to 2 lbs/inch.

25. The combination of claim 17, wherein said first and second engagement members are manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of less than about $2 \frac{1}{2}$ lbs/inch.

26. The combination of claim 17, wherein said first and second engagement members are manually pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling force of between about $1 \frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lbs/inch.

27. A method of opening and re-closing a flexible package containing a food product, comprising the steps of:

1) providing in combination:

a) a flexible package having

a elastomeric front wall and an elastomeric rear wall;
said front wall and said rear wall being sealed
together at a top seal;

a first zipper part attached to an inside surface of
said front wall and having a first engagement member facing said
rear wall;

a second zipper part attached to an inside surface of
said rear wall and having a second engagement member facing said
front wall;

said first and second engagement members being engaged
together;

said top seal and said first and second engagement
members being pinch-grip openable under a pinch-grip pulling
force applied to said front and rear walls below said engagement
members;

said front and rear walls having a sufficient strength
to resist tearing and deformation under the application of said
pinch-grip pulling force during pinch-grip opening; and

b) a food product stored inside said package below said
first and second engagement members;

2) pinch-grip opening said package by manually pulling with
a force of at least said pinch-grip pulling force opposite sides
of said package below said zipper to open both said zipper, by
disengaging said engagement portions, and said upper seal from
the product side outward in a single pinch-grip opening step;

3) removing a portion of said food product from said
package;

4) re-closing said package by manually re-engaging said
first and second engagement members.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein during said single step

of pinch-grip opening, said zipper is at least partially disengaged before said top seal begins to open.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein after said zipper is at least partially disengaged, the force required to continue disengagement of the engagement members is greatly reduced.

30. The method of claim 27, further including the step of providing said top seal with an engagement strength of less than about 3 lbs/inch, such that said top seal disengages upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said engagement strength.

31. The method of claim 27, further including the step of providing said top seal with an engagement strength of between about 1 to 2 lbs/inch, such that said top seal disengages upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said engagement strength.

32. The method of claim 27, further including the step of providing said zipper with a zipper engagement strength of less than about $2 \frac{1}{2}$ lbs/inch, such that said engagement portions disengage upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said zipper engagement strength.

33. The method of claim 30, further including the step of providing said zipper with a zipper engagement strength of less than about $2 \frac{1}{2}$ lbs/inch, such that said engagement portions disengage upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said zipper engagement strength.

34. The method of claim 27, further including the step of providing said zipper with a zipper engagement strength of

between about 1 ½ to 2 lbs/inch, such that said engagement portions disengage upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said zipper engagement strength.

35. The method of claim 30, further including the step of providing said zipper with a zipper engagement strength of between about 1 ½ to 2 lbs/inch, such that said engagement portions disengage upon a pinch-grip pulling force greater than said zipper engagement strength.

36. The method of claim 27, further including the step of providing said top seal by heat/pressure/dwell forming said top seal.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said heat/pressure/dwell forming includes applying heat and pressure for a dwell period.

38. The method of claim 36, wherein said heat/pressure/dwell forming includes applying pressure, without heat, for a dwell period.